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178 change. Thus much of the sweeping change that occurred in city life under comparable pressures did not occur in the peasant villages.

221 The main economic and social unit of
527 the village is the family, and a special study is devoted to that subject. Here we should sketch the rhythm of village life and something of its annual cycle of activity.

The New Year holiday, for the people of China the first fifteen days of the year, is the main period of leisure for the villagers. Food is prepared in advance, and even the women may rest from their cooking during the first days of the holiday. The village is decorated with nien-hua (New Year's pictures) and ch'un-lien (paired New Year's Day mottoes). Visiting friends, and relatives, gambling, eating the best food of the year, wearing the best clothes, and indulging the children make this the most festive period in the year. For many families it is the only time in the year when they can afford to eat meat dishes. The special dishes of the season vary from province to province. In the northern provinces chiao-tzu (meat dumplings) and other wheat-based elaborate dishes are particular favorites; as one moves south, rice-based delicacies such as nien-kao (year cakes) figure more prominently in the New Year's feasts. Besides being a time of celebration, the New Year is also the time for settling accounts; for many

- 527/21 farmers there will be little left for celebration when the creditors have been dealt with.

241 In the rice lands of the Southwest the most intensive work of the agricultural year begins immediately after the New Year. At that time the farmer harvests his winter crops -- usually rape and wheat sometimes supplemented with winter beans and peas.

243 Right after the New Year, often before the winter harvest, the farmer sets out his rice plants in nursery beds near the farmhouse. Then he removes his winter crop stubble and plows and prepares the fields for the young rice plants. He spreads fertilizer over the land and then breaches the dike and allows the irrigation water to flow in. After the desired water level is reached the field is harrowed again and again; then begins the back-breaking work of transplanting the rice shoots from the nursery beds to the flooded fields. The farmer has an easier life during the ripening of the grain. As the grain ripens, the fields dry, and at last it is harvest time. The harvesting and threshing are done with primitive implements, and many hands are required; straw is carefully

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805 t'ui cut off a piece of his own flesh and gave it to the prince to eat, and thus saved his life. When the prince got to the seat of power, he forgot his faithful henchman, whereupon he fled with his mother, having a willow twig stuck in his hat, to a certain Mien Shan 綿山. When the prince eventually recollected his friend and benefactor he sent men to seek him; Though it was reported that he was hidden on a certain mountain, they could not find him. So in desperation they set fire to the brushwood on the mountain to force him out, but he would not yield and was burned to death; and ever since that time some remembrance has been kept of him; though no one refrains from lighting a fire on that day as formerly, still many people wear a twig of the willow tree, either in the hat or hair, in remembrance of him.

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221 *Ku yü*, rice rain. This is the time when the rice seed bed is sown. Rain and sunshine are both needed at this time.

Li hsia, beginning of summer. Summer is believed to come from the south.

Hsiao man, small fullness. That is, the *hsiao ch'un* or spring crop is ready for reaping in order to clear the land for the summer crop.

Mang chung, hurrying to plant the rice crop. This is the busiest season of the year, with reaping and ploughing, harrowing and planting.

Hsia chih (夏至), the midsummer solstice. At this season the male and female principles are unequal and therefore have to be avoided.

The people now begin to count the days till the dog days or 三伏天 commence. If the three *fu* (伏) are complete, there will be 30 days, but they rarely are complete, the autumn coming in before these days have run through their course, but after autumn there are still twenty-four autumn tigers, 秋老虎, following on the *san-fu*. In each Chinese moon there are three *k'eng* (庚), that is, one in every ten days; after midsummer three of these *k'eng* are counted and then the dog days begin, and may last from 21 to 29 days.

Hsiao shu, small heat, and *ta shu*, great heat; these two cover the period just spoken of as the dog days.

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Li ch'iu. The beginning of autumn, which is believed to come from the west. The people are pleased if it is very hot on this date as it means there will be dry grain in the granaries. Again, if this day should happen to be a *chia* (甲), it will rain for 120 days, if a *ping* (丙), it will be fine for that time. 805 221

Ch'u shu, the finish of the heat; after this date the water is drained from the general crop of rice.

Pai lu, white dew. Cool weather arrives.

Ch'iu fên, mid-autumn equinox.

Han lu, cold dew. At this season the farmers sow turnips, plant cabbages, sow tobacco seeds, the tobacco seedlings standing all through the winter, ready to be planted out in the spring.

Shuang Chiang, descending frost. The military official goes out at this time to meet the frost which is said to appear as a horse-headed woman. This is the time when all nature dies, and the officials follow after Heaven's idea and carry out such executions as may be necessary.

Li tung, the beginning of the winter, which is believed to come from the north.

Hsiao hsiieh, small snow, and *Ta hsiieh*, great snow. These two periods cover a part of the winter in which it is said the pot cannot be heated.

Tung chih, midwinter. The ancients kept this as New Year. At this season the people worship their ancestors 始祖, and the officials worship the tablet to the reigning emperor. This is said by many to be the root of the year. At this season the family hog is killed or the meat purchased with which the *La jou* (臘味), or New Year bacon, is prepared. From midwinter begins the counting of the nines until eighty-one days is reached. In this connection the following stanzas are in common use: 805

The first and second nines, the hands are blown for cold.
The third and fourth nines, the frost kills pigs and dogs.
The fifth and sixth nines, the frost kills the old ox.